

February 8, 1960

Dr. Norman Horowitz
Division of Biology
California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, California

Dear Norm:

Your letter of the 6th just came in.

I will certainly do my best to see that your views are well represented in any discussion even insofar as we do not agree in every detail. I think I do agree that the acquisition of planetary samples is, and should be stated to be, a primary goal of planetary exploration. Perhaps because this is so obvious I may not have stressed this properly in the manuscript. On the other hand, I also feel that we should go just as far as we can with instrumental analysis partly to see what insight this will give on the kinds of hazards we discussed. I think that when the preliminary experiments along these lines have been done, we will then be in a much better position to decide which, if any, precautionary measures are still justified.

I think your remarks about Columbian exploration and the return of syphilis to the Old World are quite apropos. But I think we are in a better position than Columbus was to have our cake and eat it too. I think it is unfair to suggest that the choice is between syphilis and America when a little caution and patience could give us the best of both worlds.

I don't believe that it would be possible, without a well financed public relations campaign to frighten the public out of space exploration. Judging by the way things have been going, a rash blunder motivated by no policy at all is a more likely danger.

I'm quite willing to acknowledge that any views on back contamination are controversial and hope that this is implicit in my revised manuscript. I suggest that you do prepare a carefully drawn statement for circulation to Westex, and perhaps to the Space Science Board at large. We might judge, from the reactions to it, whether it would be worth-while to hold another meeting to discuss this problem.

- 2 -

Since with the best intentions I don't think I could present your point of view as eloquently as you could yourself. Perhaps your concern for this problem may move you to decide to come up for the meeting on the 29th.

Yours as ever,

Joshua Lederberg